

InterAction Case Study: Marks Paneth & Shron

Company: Marks Paneth & Shron
Industry: Accountancy
Product: InterAction

Marks Paneth & Shron LLP (MP&S) is a premier middle-market accounting firm. Its staff of more than 400 professionals, of which there are 56 partners and principals, help businesses, entrepreneurs and high net worth individuals meet their tax, audit, technology and revenue goals. MP&S offers a full range of services to meet the requirements of the many industries it serves and maintains strong, personal relationships that assure individually focused planning.

The Need for a Sophisticated CRM System

Prior to selecting LexisNexis InterAction, MP&S used a version of ACT that was managed by the marketing department. Historically, this mechanism worked – despite numerous limitations and “watercooler-style” informality – for the small group of players that were instrumental in maintaining and developing the client base. As the company grew exponentially year-over-year, informal knowledge sharing through a contact management system and anecdotal conversations was not sufficient. The simplicity of the database and the limited contributions from the firm inhibited development and spurred a search for a new solution.

“We realized that while our original system had productive beginnings, it was not scaling for our growth,” explained Sara Walsh, managing director of marketing for Marks Paneth & Shron. “Another concern was that the most critical data was largely held in people’s heads, which did not support our goal of company-wide information sharing.”

Using CRM to Manage a Growing Number of Relationships Proactively

While the marketing and business development teams at MP&S had long known the importance of a streamlined and well-organized system to track contacts and the firm’s dealings with them, the rest of the staff was only beginning to understand the necessity. As the employee and client base grew, the entire firm acknowledged that it needed to be more proactive in managing relationships.

“A new CRM system presented an incredible opportunity to be smarter about how our business runs and operates,” explained Walsh. “To that end, the smarter we were about the business, the better decisions we would make and the more efficiently we would use our partners’ time and energy for the most successful end.”

The firm has found that features like Who Knows Whom™ support InterAction’s claims that it can serve as a central repository for the relationship intelligence that will help the firm find, win and keep clients. InterAction not only provides MP&S with a comprehensive perspective on potential engagements and deals, it also offers the ability to determine what companies and people play a key role in the firm’s profitability, and those which are not contributing to the bottom line. The firm has found that in implementing sophisticated CRM software like InterAction, it has streamlined its business operations, improved its allocation of resources and armed itself overall with a stronger ability to make appropriate and timely decisions.

The Selection Process

After a two-month search, the firm chose LexisNexis InterAction to meet its CRM needs because of its ability to provide an understanding, client-by-client, partner-by-partner and donation-by-donation, of the complete performance profile of the firm and how various relationships play a role in its success. Other key factors that contributed to this decision include the system’s ability to:

“From its inception, InterAction was designed to work with professional services organisations, which is a fundamental difference that makes it the right choice for our firm.”

Sara Walsh, Managing Director of Marketing, Marks Paneth & Shron

- Empower professionals to discover and use their colleagues and partners' pre-existing relationships.
- Better manage the engagement cycle and win clients faster.
- Educate MP&S about market share, such as how deeply entrenched the firm is in a specific industry.
- Segment the firm's revenues by market and industry.
- Shed light on emerging market share opportunities.
- Help partners target new clients and project new areas for revenue with existing clients.
- Provide access to multiple users in one centralized location.
- Track mailings, meetings and events to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing and business development efforts.

Additionally, the firm needed the new system to assimilate easily into existing business systems. The fact that InterAction would integrate into hand-held devices, such as BlackBerry®, and third-party applications, such as Microsoft Outlook®, was ideal. Because of this, the partners, whose institutional knowledge was critical to the success of this tool, would not have to learn a new system or technology in order to start populating InterAction immediately. This also minimized the need for extensive training and follow-up instruction, as employees firm-wide found the system very easy to use. Finally, MP&S took the integration with third-party applications one step further by linking it to the firm's current time and billing system to make it an even more integral part of daily business life.

A Solution that Touches All Firm Efforts

The impact that InterAction has made on MP&S has manifested itself in a variety of ways. Primarily, InterAction helps MP&S maintain ongoing and relevant communication with clients. While the firm has grown to be one of the largest independent accounting firms in the New York region, it continues to be distinguished by the personalized attention and customized services it provides each client. The firm knew that its reputation and potential for additional growth was dependant upon maintaining the strong personal relationships that assure MP&S clients individually-focused, judicious planning.

In addition, the system has become a resource to identify primary business development partners and resources. As MP&S depends largely on referrals for growth, it relies on InterAction to determine what sources deliver consistent referrals. This feature reveals sources of potential revenue, as well as firms and individuals to which it would want to provide reciprocal recommendations.

Business development and marketing efforts at MP&S have also improved significantly since implementing InterAction. For example, partners and business development professionals can segment clients and prospects by comparing the opportunity to firm benchmarks to determine market share, allowing MP&S to be smarter about its growth plans. InterAction's ability to illuminate new prospects and new areas of revenue with current clients has enhanced business development and marketing efforts at the firm.

Finally, multiple users can access and update the system simultaneously and support staff may enter information by proxy on behalf of others. MP&S can populate the system quickly and consistently, ensuring that everyone at MP&S can access the most accurate and timely information for virtually any business activity.

"In the past, word-of-mouth helped to grow our business – today, informal knowledge-sharing isn't enough," said Walsh. "I don't know of any other product that does relationship mapping in quite the same way as InterAction, which has added a framework to our business communication. From its inception, InterAction was designed to work with professional services organizations, which is a fundamental difference that makes it the right choice for our firm."

The Potential to Extend Value

Marks Paneth & Shron intends to continue to glean more value out of InterAction as it cleanses its system of extraneous data and integrates even deeper into the firm's culture. In time, firm management sees this becoming a part of partner performance evaluation and a strong indicator of the firm's success. "We find that the more we use InterAction, the more we envision the potential and the possibilities it holds," claimed Walsh.



Enterprise Solutions